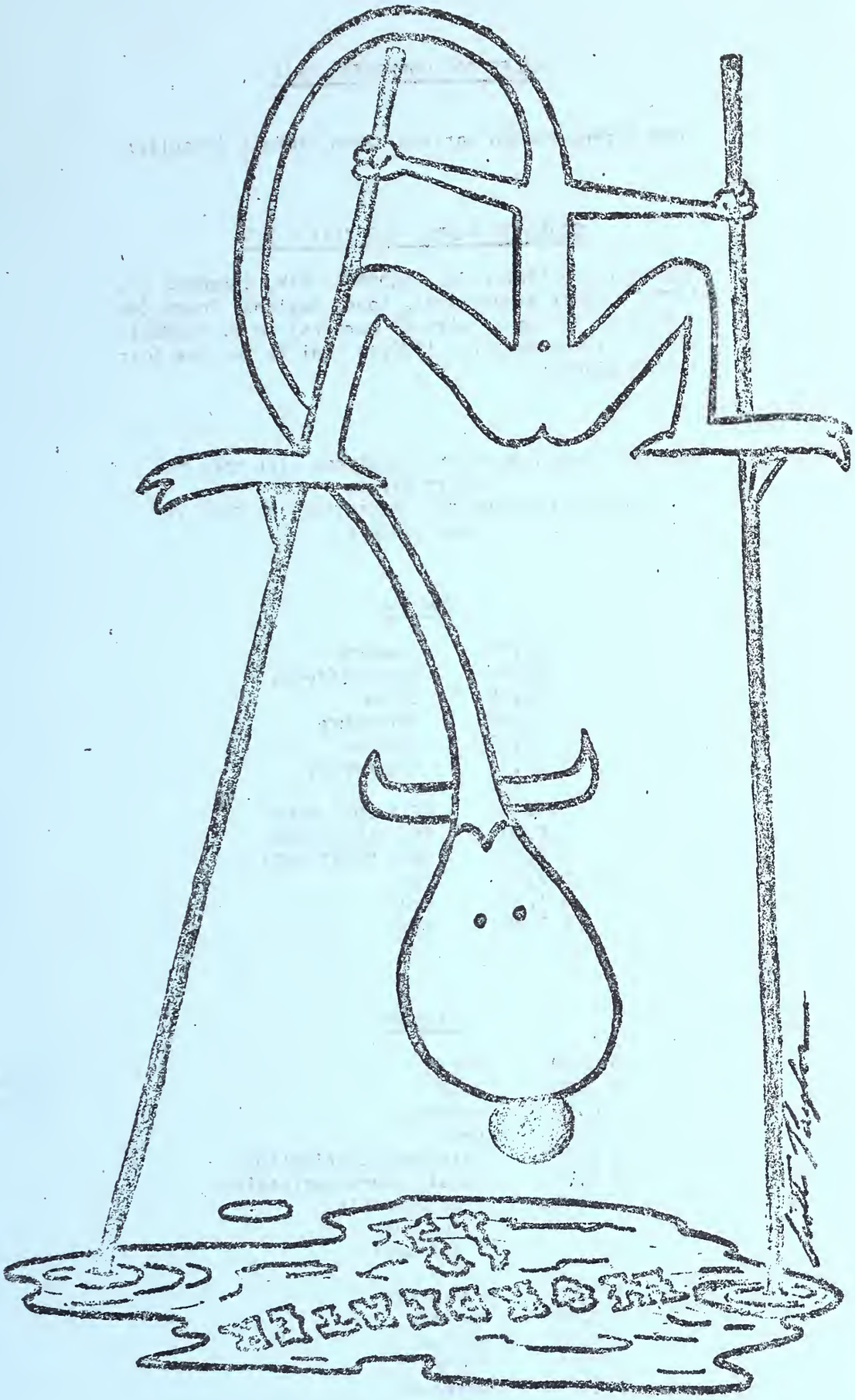

STAFF FOR WORDEATER XIII

Joan Koren, Sharon Marizza, John Stobart (faculty)

WORDEATER AWARDS FOR XIII & XIV

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR WORDEATER XIV, December 19, 1975. Submit Manuscripts, Cover Designs, Poems (on 8 1/2" by 14" paper with 1" margins) to J. Stobart, C1069, by December 19, 1975, to qualify for the following awards:

THE $10 COVER DESIGN FOR WORDEATER XIII GOES TO:
SCOTT TAYLOR
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Poetry

$5.00	Imagery
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$ 5.00	Plot
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$ 5.00	Editorial
$ 5.00	Article
$ 5.00	Review
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BOYS & GIRLS --- TOGETHER?

What Do You Want Me to Do?

You say I don't act like I love you.
Well, what do you want me to do?
Act like some crazy girl
And throw myself at you?

I really truly love you.
Well, what do you want me to do?
If I kissed the ground you walk on,
Would that suit you?

I always try to be faithful.
Well, what do you want me to do?
Wear a black and red button
That says I belong to you?

It seems you don't want me.
Well, what do you want me to do?
Be a fool that sits alone
Always waiting for you?

--Beverly Travis

Maybe I'm the One

Maybe I'm the One
feeling as I do
to fasten up the memories
and start toward the sun.

Maybe I should be
a distant melody
to leave you far behind
for another place and time.

Forgetting those days
with the familiar phrases
through top-ten songs
and long-life sayings.

Maybe for you
it will seem to go on
lose the past
begin anew.

And with each hour
starting tomorrow
we shall find
a different kind.

Maybe you should see
to a different light
because I'm the one
that wants to fly

away.

--Marge Novy

You Lost

You say you want to be
free
but what is
free?
to you - to me.
Free to run the breeze
to catch the sun?
Free to do as you please,
without anyone
without anything,
to get in your way?
Free to hurt others,
without feelings
without regrets?

I have feelings
I have regrets
I want to be free
from you - not from me.

Are you happy?
Now you're free
Free from the bonds,
Free from the chains.
Bonds and chains I represent
Free to be without me
Free to be.

--Debbie Bahr

Saga of the Suburban Housewife

You find you've got dandruff
And middle aged spread
And nobody wants to
Take you to bed.

You're always tired
And asleep by eleven,
Can't make breakfast
For the children at seven.

You walk out in shorts,
See the guy next door
Who kind of yawns
As if it's a bore.

The mailman comes
And there's nothing for you
Except a notice
That some bill is due.

You're bored and play cards
At every chance.
When no one's looking
You dream of romance.

You've tried losing weight
And dying your hair
But no one around you
Seems to care.

You spend the afternoon
Just sitting in the tub. . . . . .
Suburban Housewife,
Welcome to the club!

--Beverly Stuben

Meeting You

Meeting you at a least expected time
In a less expected place
I was caught unaware
Somewhere within the womb of walls,
The tomb of walls I had built
Year by year
Stone by stone from
Fear by fear.
Securely armored, I thought,
Against the world, the stranger
From the hurt of pain and feeling
Within my own womb
Unborn and alone.

Wanting you as I had never wanted,
Surprised by feelings of want and need
Within myself and commanding
From the outside world,
From the stranger,
Danger cautioned,
"Take heed, I plead,
Inside your womb of walls
Your tomb of walls.
For I can feel the stirring of
The breath of life
The death of life
Within your sheltered womb
If you be born."

Loving you was like a trembling earthquake
That shook and shattered the walls
Surrounding the tomb,
Guarding the womb
Causing the pain
Of feeling to rush in.
Defenseless now,
Frightened, I was born
Into a more frightening world.
Though Danger said, "Stay,"
I could not.
For in loving you
There was no other way.

Together,
We cast away each stone
Built with care
Year by year
Until there were no walls left
Between us.

--Beverly Stuben

Sunshine Faces

Wet sad eyed faces
grim hate lined eyes
they've been down places
they've been told lies
But what did they see there?
And what do they know?
Only what they've let be there-
Only what they've let show.
Think of what they've let go.
Sunshine faces
love lined eyes
When they go places
they need no guise of woe

--Cosmic Bob

California Kid I

"here comes the Kid
got his car in a skid."
they know the Kid's the one
who finds pleasure and his fun
by cruisin', and making midnight runs.
they hear an engine's roar
and hear the tires screaming
fulfilling part of the Kid's dreaming.
Slammin' gears
at nine grand.
they know he'll never get caught
by any of the man.
a midnight warrior
he's sometimes called
they know he's never been falled.
driving a chariot
pulled by seven hundred horse
will he win, they say "of course."
in the night
when an engine roars and tires skid.
they all know
it's the California Kid-

--California Kid

Merman's Fishwife

Hour glass figure an' a perfume neck
Beach comb digger on a sailboat deck
Sand box sitter in a pale tan way
Waves wash over beckoning tide
Charting the star seen lines
For the reckoning
Merman's Fishwife she don't ride well
She gets seasick on his boat
Merman's Fishwife she can't swim
Strange that she got caught by him
Caught in the suds and foam
Brought here far from home
Merman's Fishwife she looks sunk
Spent the trip in Merman's bunk
In seclusion
Popping them seasick pills

--Cosmic Bob

Modesty Underfoot

Scuffin' her feet and stepping on cracks
She don't appreciate back breakin' effort that
Mom and Dad make cause Mom and Dad
Ain't never home
Someone at the playground
Looked up her dress yesterday
While she bent to pull her knee socks up
She went home to put on slacks
Modesty Underfoot
Scuffin' her feet and steppin' on cracks

Underfoot's brother smokes funny little cigarettes
She knows it's against the law
But she likes the way they smell herself
He'll teach her to shotgun her friends
And in the room one day with her head shop stereo
Underfoot got real stoned
Bent to pull up her knee socks
And looked up her dress herself

In This House

In this house, I am no longer a person.
(Was I ever?)
The "me" mingling with the outside world
Knows longing; aching to be heard with heart's hearing.
My psyche's soul has worth, just beyond the heavy door
That divides me from each and all of those I love.
(Do you love me?)

In this house, I no longer have stature.
(Did I ever?)
My sorry opinions, only words, cause constant conflict.
Even thought and feeling is a costly experience
Too dear to bear with rheumy eye and dewy cheek.
Privacy mirrors the agonizing image of what I'll never be.
(Just me.)

In this house, mute acceptance is demanded
(Given never!)
By man's masterful domain of dollars and sex,
Imposed on me without exception or consent,
Devouring identity and even worse, all mentality
With that insatiable gluttony called Male Pride.
(Noblesse oblige.)

In this house of carpet, wood and plastered walls,
The curtains curl about with airs of subordination,
Dragging the chains of family sustenance, pommeled
In the crotch of some strange Amazonian Hercules,
Screaming rage beneath emancipation's rape.
(Nobody cares.)

In this house, respect is gendered with testosterone's
Poisonous gases which reek repugnant spermatazoon.
Yes, you worked long and hard these many years.
(What did I?)
Inflationary bastard, ERA, sprang unaided from Pandora's box
Crying out for justice to Congress and to Church.
(And you, too!)

--Sharon Marizza

Puppet Show

Hey, little wind-up doll--
You're my favorite toy.
Created by a master's hand--
Your performance is a joy.
Your design is so divine, though--
Your image is so human.
To run, to jump, to laugh, to cry--
To act just like a woman.

Hey, little wind-up doll--
Your pirouettes are slowing.
Is your movement getting rusty?
Your eye's no longer glowing.
Were you listed buyer beware--
Or a company guaranteed?
Will you last three score and ten--
Or will fate intercede?

Hey, little wind-up doll--
Your mainspring broke today.
Old favorite toy of mine--
There's no replacement on its way.
Unique, miraculous, sublime--
Your rave reviews are ended.
Return to sender on the box--
Alone and unattended.

--Sharon Marizza

How does it feel to be alone
in a room full of friends?
How does it feel to be on your own
making love to your radio?

When you walk the straight and grassy road
where the sun is hot and the rain is cold
with only your own hand to hold
how does it feel to walk alone?

The heartless sun in the empty sky
not humbled by American pie
the stars are cold, they do not cry
They turn their heads and wonder why?

How does it feel to be alone
in a room full of friends?
How does it feel to burn with a fire
that you know will never end?

The grassy road is not so long
not poisoned by the passing throng
The weak, the slow are now the strong
Silence does not defeat the song

How does it feel to be alone
in a room full of friends?
How does it feel to walk alone
down the crowded highway?
How does it feel?
How does it feel?
How does it feel?

--Rich Le Clercq

Cross-Examination of Eve*

Cold wind blows. . .
. . . the Gods look down in anger
on this your child. . .
Why so unforgiving?
. . . and why so cold?
Been a long time crossing. . .
. . . Bridge of Sighs. . .

Is there an angel with a flaming sword. . .
. . . underneath this spreading tree.
Here it was,the origin of sin I've heard. . .
. . . at the edge of History.
This half-bitten piece of fruit I bear. . .
. . . is to be exhibit "C". . .

At the Cross-Examination. . . of Eve. . .

Swollen with a prominent silence. . .
. . . she tampered with the undefined.
She tampered with the tree of knowledge. . .
. . . and found herself a separate mind.
Witness now confusion of reality. . .
. . . forgive me if I seem unkind. . .

At the Cross-Examination . . . of Eve. . .

Despite all I've learned, I wonder will I be.
siding with the virtues of Stupidity. . .
I am attorney of eternity. . .
. . . across a Bridge of Sides. . .
Loss of Innocence is what we grieve. . .

At the Cross-Examination of Eve.

Intellectual dichotomy. . .
. . . can't continue for all Time.
There's a question here of Entropy. . .
. . . I build my case against her Crime.
I will testify with all my sophistry. . .
. . . in judgment of the lost sublime. . .

At the Cross-Examination of Eve.
--Cosmic Bob

*This poem is the author's version of imagined new stanzas to "Bridge of Sighs" sung by Robin Trower.

ON I AND THOU AND WHICHEVER ELSE CONCERNED

CRYSTAL TOWER, COUNT YOUR DAYS
I'VE DAMNED YOU AND YOUR EVIL WAYS

THE TRUMPETS B AST
THE DRUMS RESOUND
THE KING HAS COME
TO CLAIM HIS CROWN!

YOUR SERPENT GUARDS ARE SLAIN AND DEAD
MY AXE IS SHARP, FOR YOU TO DREAD
I AM NOT FOOLED BY SIMPLE SNARES
THAT HAVE CAUGHT MINION UNAWARES

THE TRUMPETS BLAST
THE DRUMS RESOUND
THE KING HAS COME
TO CLAIM HIS CROWN!

O Fool, put down your silly axe.
My serpent guards are at your back.
You bore me, now be OFF! away!
I've better things to do Today.

What purpose have you hewing down my walls?
For honor? Or because your duty calls?
Vindictive, being bitten by my snake?
Fear? I cause you or your Friends to quake?

THE TRUMPETS BLAST
THE DRUMS RESOUND
THE KING HAS COME
TO CLAIM HIS CROWN!

THE AXE HEWED CLEAN, THE CRYSTAL FALLS
MINIONS RELEASED FROM PRISON-HALLS
EVIL FAILS AND TUMBLES DOWN
THE KING IS COME TO CLAIM HIS CROWN!

--Rich Le Clercq

The Last Toast - for Father

I gaze through silent, saddened eyes
As I watch you fall into your past,
Another drink will hide the lies
That so often made the sorrow last.

No love can bear the loathesome weight,
Of faithlessness and lust,
Your vows fell, crumbled under hate,
And eroded unto dust.

Go drink your toast to fidelity,
To silver, wine and gold;
Here's to the long, forgotten dreams,
That keep the love she sold.

Bitter, broken paternal soul,
Plagued by liquor, guilt and fears,
I can see the halfened whole
Which hides behind the held-back tears.

No time is left to lose yourself,
The time is here to gain;
Still, you refill your glass with liquid pride
Just to swallow it again.

So drink this last toast to loneliness,
To whiskey, rum and rye;
You've lost your one and onlyness,
And are drowning in the reason why.

--Bonnie Sayko

Like a White Lotus

Like a white lotus
the dawn star blossoms
on a sea of sky.

--Steve Clements

Dad?

for the first ten years of my life
you were a very important man.
doing secret work
for good ol' Uncle Sam.
for those ten years
i was very sad.
not experiencing the things
between a boy and his dad.
then Sam ruined you, made you sick
so with his medical retirement
he gave you a kick.

the second ten years were also bad
you made me sick, and didn't know you had.
all kinds of downers
is what you'd do.
and i even suspect
you messed with booze too.

the things you did
are hard for people to believe.
like me taking you out of the snow
on Christmas and New Years eve.

i should hate you
i've been told.
the things you did
should have made me cold.

the thought of Dec. 3rd
i can't hide.
eight days before my birthday
i watched you die.

i should hate you
for wrecking my life.
and leaving us in a bind
me and your wife.
the way i feel
can't be explained.
dad i love you.

--California Kid

Please Change

If man would accept the
reality of that surrounding him
In a perception free from
the bias of his dogmatic principles
And work with the reality
even in its shortcomings
through an open mind
Knowing that what man professes
to believe
Now may someday be changed
(In a day or a thousand years)
But not condemning man that he
Was bold enough to believe in one
Until his knowledge showed him
A better explanation and understanding
Then all mankind would prosper

And turn from constantly criticizing
The ignorance of others
(because
they too cannot understand
and are consumed with a pride
that will not let them expose
their own ignorance)

Turn to humility
Accepting others and having
compassion
That we can experience life
In its fullest meaning
Living within love.

--Camilla L. Corbin

Is

Is the flight of the bird
set in his life?
Is the way of the worm
set in his world?
Is the path of a man
set in his way?

--Becky Beckham

For My Father

I never knew him--not really.
Not in the way I would have liked.
To the small child, he was
A mountain, immovable, blocking
everything from view.
But a mountain is a mountain
and not a man.
A giant, unreachable, because he could not bend
and a child has such short arms
with which to reach.
But a giant is a giant and not a man.
A God, who demanded no other gods before him.
I had neither the strength
Nor the weakness to break the commandment.
For God is God and not a man.

Yet somewhere within that mountain
the erosion of time must have brought about
the rumbling of, the crumbling of
unrealized dreams
Unrecognized, unconsummated by consuming fire;
For even a mountain is not impervious
to the realities of life
And the years have a way of taming
that which seemed impregnable
Until it becomes just a part of the landscape
no longer the whole.
Though the giant cannot bend, the child grows
and with the same outstretched arms
reaches to something beyond the giant,
beyond the child.
And to the God who demanded
no other God before him,
in time I broke the commandment.

What is left to say, except
I never knew him--not really.
Not in the way I would have liked.

--Beverly Stuben

=

The Beginning at One

The thoughts of mind
Shall never cease
Or even falter
Slightly from their
Continuous barrage of
Answerless questions
Until the day
Man
Finds an answer
To *one* question
Then all questions
Will be answered.

--Camilla L. Corbin

Oh, God

Of O's there are four
For all to see.
Omnipotent--
Like reaction pow-power baby.
Omniscient--
An ago might be a nows to be.
Omnipresent--
Atom times Ought to Infinity.
Oneness--
Me and the Big 3 He
Form a we.
Of course we're just four
For all to see.
An Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent
triune God
And his little ol' Sunbeam,
me.

--Nancy Riggi

Baby - I've Lit Your Fire

For the glory of God--
Go girl--
Grow and glow, girl--
Stand on a steeple,
And shine on the people.
Blaze bright--
Blister blight--
Warm waners--
Parch profaners--
Heat hearts--
Direct charts--
Scorch status quo--
Blast it below.
The lethargic "laser"--
With bolts from your brazier--
Zap with zeal--
Fellows that "feel"--
Witness My wonder--
Tell of My thunder--
Exault exuberant emotion--
Domini's devotion!
Then gleamingly grin--
You're a sunbeam for Him.
Reflect the three Me
For skeptics to see.
My temple "tone" up
Your omissions "own up."
Beg Brother's bread
By His love be led.
With passion pray
Everywhere--Every day.
Pride
Put aside
Another Me
Be
Your Bird
Heard
Your sung plea.
I send thee.
Go girl--
Grow and glow, girl.
Toil and not tire
For Baby - I've lit your fire.

--Nancy Riggi

"Go Take a Duck to Lunch"

I met an old man with a stubby, grey beard
no wiser was there than he,
with a grin of delight that brightened
his face
he quothe these few words unto me,

"Go take a duck to lunch, my dear,
such pleasure will set you free
You worry and fret over such things
as whether or not to be!"

Now these words made no sense and I
worried at first
if someone had spiked the tea,
but the following day before he left
he said once again unto me,

"Go take a duck to lunch, my dear,
I urge you to try it and see,
your mind will clear and your soul will
rest,
This surely will set you free."

I knew this old man, I knew of his wisdom,
could he be telling me true?
He'd helped me before in my search for
an answer,
What if he'd said unto you?

"Go take a duck to lunch, my dear,"
Would you frown or tremble with fear?
Is he crazy, off his head? Would you
listen or put him to bed?

I thought and I pondered his strange
request
and I wondered how funny it would be
if I broke down and took that duck to
lunch--
Am I as crazy as HE?

As I caught myself thinking of a pleasant
spot
to have lunch, that duck and me,
I had to laugh at the old man's words
for in truth they had set me free!

"Go take a duck to lunch, my dear,
I urge you to try it and see
the world's not as frightening or half as
cold
as your mind makes it out to be."

Now when one asks about the state things
are in,
whether he be asking from car, cab or
truck,
I just smile politely and say I can't stop
for I must go to lunch with my duck!

--Lynn Vaugh

Blaring of Silence

humming of lights
footsteps of mice
break the silence bold.
in from the outside
find a place to hide
from the mourning, dreary and cold.
blaring of silence in the morning
to start a day of classes
that end up, usually boring.
you don't know me
you can't see me
in my private world i'm free.
exploring my mind
nothing to find
i don't know, i'm just me.
passionate as you
and just as full of violence.
sitting, listening
to the blaring of silence.

--California Kid

Listen to Us

Vote for me.
Cause a riot.
Get high on grass,
C'mon and try it.
Kill a baby.
Love your mother.
Worship God.
Hate your brother.

Buy our blue-jeans.
Eat lots of Wheaties.
Join the Marines.
Help the needy.
Hire the handicapped.
Get into shape.
Smoke for pleasure.
Eat California grapes.

Save the country.
Please adopt.
Call a friend,
Call a cop.
Kick the habit.
Give a damn.
Don't buy lettuce.
Say "Thank-you Ma'am."

Listen to us.
Hear OUR voice.
Do it our way,
You have no choice.
And if you make it,
And can't unwind it,
Blow your mind,
If you can find it.

--Bonnie Sayko

"No Heroic Efforts, Please"*

One, two, three, four, five.
Brain waves quiver--
Still alive.

Six. Six. Six. Six. Six.
Brain waves dormant--
Needle sticks.

Five, four, three, two, one.
Pull the plug.
Lord, I'm done.

--Paulette Huston

*This note was attached to a patient's chart in a local hospital and became the title for this poem.

As I Run

"I must not miss the train"--
this thought compels me as I run to catch
the Doon Express.
With luggage floating along before me
above the churning river of dark faces
precariously balanced on the head of a
scurrying coolie--
like weighty trunks on a rowboat in
river rapids--
I hurry along at my bearer's heels just
in case
he should lose his balance,
or trip on a body and lose it all.
Then I see, lost in the noisy, chaotic
crowd,
on the cold and filthy concrete platform--
like that one amongst millions of passing
cars that suddenly hits--
a naked child all alone.
My God! I think, and feel
My God! how truly ALONE
each of us really is.

--Steve Clements

Muzzy Rabbit

Muzzy rabbit was a hare
Muzzy thought she was a bear
Muzzy fought a tiger-cat
Muzzy won, imagine that!

The forest hers
O, What to do
Hunter
Shotgun
Rabbit Stew

--Rich Le Clercq

The Ship

There's legend of an ancient ship
Which sails across the sea,
And takes men to a far-off place--
A land where all are free.

That water, vast and treacherous--
Say, who have ever crossed--
A foolish man that dared to try
Would surely soon be lost.

Of course, who wouldn't want to leave
This world of strife and woe?
We all would like to sail away--
Some dream that they will go.

The wiser know: life's a battle,
Each one must work and save;
"Dreaming's a waste of precious time,
You'll soon be in your grave!"

Time rolls on, names are forgotten,
The "wise" man's liege is gone.
The Battle rages endlessly,
But legend still lives on.

The dreamers all have sailed that ship--
They crossed that fearsome sea.
They waited always by the shore
And live now, ever free.

--Steve Clements

Data Controller Doveside Core Data Down Cake...

Everything you hear about and all you
read
has meaning and reason and rhyme.
It's everything you think about and
all you've done,
but English is a frame of mind.
There is much in your expression as you
search for words;
being human you're the active verb .
Diatribes and Lectures,
Sermons and Conversation.
All about life on Earth,
Philosophy and conservation.
Off the top of my head
on the tip of my tongue--
Data controller doveside--
Hawks don't understand
rational communication...
Tough small talk back to back,
small nation against small nation.
It's not human feeling they lack,
it's poor translation,
hate reaction
compound fractioned.
NO EXPLANATION...
FINE APPLE UP SIDE EGRESS

--Cosmic Bob

Of What Are You Dreaming?

Middle America
lying quietly, soundly sleeping,
reaching out in all directions
as if you long to embrace the sky...
And I wonder, have you ever touched it?
Houses, suburbs, cities,
rather insipid,
like so many piles of brick in a wide
expanse of field
reminding me of lowly dunes on the far-
away seashore:
small creepers gather and cling deter-
minedly for life's sake.
Interesting, perhaps,
if one is to get right down close
and really observe what is there to be
seen.
With endless subtly rolling plains dressed
in green finery--
your fine summer greenery--
which in autumn changes to coarsely
woven garb of a faded brown--
you seem to smile,
and then sigh, in your sleep.
Winter blizzards sweep relentlessly over y
your body
and you slowly turn over,
sinking deeply, and deeper still into
white oblivion.
And I often wonder--
of what are you dreaming?

--Steve Clements

This Is What I Really Call a Message

Dividing, Divisive, dividends of Civili-
zation,
Clutched and shifted by swollen hands,
Comforted by the cold dead winds in a
restless,
Formless way, bought sold lost and for-
gotten
Like slaves. Here among the transient
sentient
talisman lovers we grope blindly for the
light
Shadows of our dance and reign cast upon
the
Walls and pinned by torch burdened
hands for
Regenerations to follow. Finally reach-
ing a
Meeting with out medicine cabinet, a
disgusting
Lack of razor blades or hemlock among the
Ancient curative tools . . .
Brooding and brushing by our princess pets,
The beautiful mire of their carefully
cultured
beast nature femininity, mothers of our
future line . . .
Images of caves and couches crouching
crying.
Smiling at the beckoning edge of sanity..
Depression fades away.

--Cosmic Bob

Drifter (for Your Frenzy)

Willie was the sort of person who understood everyone, liked everyone, and had been everywhere. A drifter, he led the kind of life everyone dreams about. Willie collected memories and friends the way most people collect post cards or rocks. He had a special way of touching everyone.

Sometimes I think of Willie and want to cry. When I first met him I regarded him as just another starry-eyed idealist, using drifting as an excuse to be a free loader and a bum.

I was having a party one night to celebrate life (any excuse to have a party!). Everybody brought what was most important to them to the party. A lot of people brought books, records and friends and a lot of wine. James brought Willie. James said he really didn't know what to bring because the most important thing to him was brotherhood. People helping people; people loving each other. On his way over he spotted Willie hitchhiking. Willie was quite a sight in his ragged jeans, cowboy boots and leather jacket and backpack and guitar. James brought him to show brotherly love.

At first I wasn't too overly impressed with Willie. He just sort of sat back and listened to everyone explain why they brought what they did. I asked Willie what he had that was important to him.

He pulled out his guitar and said his freedom and his music were most important. He sang a song about them called "The Drifter". By the time he was half-way through, I had fallen in love.

"I'm a drifter, I'm a lonely man
I try to do whatever I can
Searchin' for something like an empty
hand
And in the end
We'll part as friends
I'll keep you deep within my heart.
And if I'm ever back this way again
We'll say the words we could never send
Sharing our dreams in a perfect blend
And till that day
You'll hear me say
You're always here though we're
apart.

I'm a drifter, I'm a lonely man
I try to do whatever I can
Searchin' for something like an empty
hand
And in the end
We'll part as friends
I'll keep you deep within my heart.*

The party broke up around 3:30 A.M. Then no one was there but Willie and me. It was a strange feeling but all through

*Written by Clyde Massaro.

Gravitational Exception

breezes of the island whisper
of the future flyer
a special one to join the sky
and float upon the wind

but the soil does darkly disagree
clutching tightly by the roots her flower
children
doesn't set them free

"witness later," laughs the wind
withdraws to plan the scene
and steal the island bride

grudgingly in time the story
wins the fancy of the earth
the legend is adopted there

prepare the one the air does promise
will fulfill by other powers
so to grant the flower flight

and the boats that bear the agent's
billowed sails appear
to civilize the land and thus prepare
the way to raise one higher
by the human hand

many hued and colored kinds of other
flower
do they bring
all are solemn jealous at the promised
wonder
sky and earth in wedding

"one among you" voiced the wind
"will soon awaken, she is chosen, flies
with me"

many years the gardener
cultivated these grand others
hues and colors borne upon the green
to grace the chamber table

legend of the earth ignores them

it was grown among the grasses
til a maiden of the island
got the blossom near the garden
soon to die of thirst alone
and stolen from the earth

"hasten now," the wind reproves her
"bear the prairie flower
climbing seek the tower"

--Cosmic Bob

Out On a Limb

My secret meeting sort of known
takes place again today
the minute's kept and nothing much to say
My soldier friend awaits. I've gone
to find the ant who's climbed the tree
...higher, freer than his fellows
wants to meet me eye to eye
upon the higher limb.
Watch him as he gestures dumbly
with excitement all about
the nest, the young, the queen.
My part is to know the secret feeling
of a future meeting, you may find your-
self forewarned,
that God will choose him carefully,
and in the afterlife explain
the meaning of your life was just to find
the ant that climbed the tree arranged
to gesture dumbly all about the nest,
the young,
the queen. No more no less eternally
it's all the meaning of your life
to find the ant upon the leaf arranged in
his important way, defined by someone else
And when you reach the wooded clearing
small explorer's fated meeting
know that he is sheltered by
your gentle wise regard for other life.
Do not sneeze him from his footing
falling far could break him badly...
(NO ONE ELSE NEED EVER KNOW,
IF OR NOT YOU'VE LET HIM GO.)
Perhaps you'll go tomorrow?
...to the woods to search the leaves to
find the ant who's climbed the tree
higher, freer than his fellows
wants to meet you eye to eye
upon the higher limb.
Watch him as he gestures dumbly
with excitement all about
the nest, the young, the queen.
Invitation message to the forest from a
soldier....

--Cosmic Bob

Margaret - My Pen Pal

So many letters have flown between us,
That I can't even begin to count all the
Hopes and dreams that we shared in them.
Our friendship has spanned the time
Of so many years,
We've grown up together -
Although apart.
Distance cannot matter, though,
When true friendship and love are its bridge.
Together, you and I will walk into the future,
Continuing to share in each other's hopes and dreams,
Continuing to remember all that we have become,
Until time and distance are nothing but illusion.

the party I felt as if I knew Willie. We sat and talked most of the time everyone else partied. There we sat, all alone in my apartment. I wasn't afraid, though. I was alone with a strange man. Or maybe he wasn't a stranger anymore.

I made a pot of coffee and Willie unrolled his sleeping bag on the living room floor. We each drank a cup and said good night. It seemed funny to be saying good night. Willie and I had grown closer in a few hours than most people do in a few months.

I got up earlier than usual the next day. Willie was still asleep. It was going to be a beautiful Indian summer day. Indian summer was always a magical sort of time. Winter was just around the corner and yet bits and pieces of summer were still here. I decided it would be a great day to go to the park and paint.

I reheated the leftover coffee and the scent of it must have gotten Willie up, too. I felt kind of embarrassed and didn't know what to say. He poured himself a cup and took it back to the living room. I excused myself and went to take a shower.

When I came back, Willie had made himself at home in the kitchen and was making a delicious breakfast. He had rolled up his bag and all of his belongings were stashed in a corner.

We both commented at the same time during breakfast, "Hey, this would be a great day for a picnic!"

So I packed up a lunch and my painting materials and we drove to the park. The picnic area was beginning to get crowded. A lot of people had the same great idea. We parked the car and hiked down a bike trail to a place that looked secluded.

We spent the entire afternoon talking and laughing and painting. Willie told me his life story.

"I was born with my thumb out singing the blues. I learned early that the only way to make it in this world is to make it alone. So I've been traveling around the world for a long time and I've always found that those who travel alone, travel the best. They are the most free."

He was very sincere and honest and I knew not to expect too much from our relationship. He really was a drifter.

"Don't you ever get lonely?" The idea of being alone was strange to me.

"No, I have friends all over the place. And if I'm somewhere that I need a friend or I'm lonely, I make friends. But I always remember the friends I have."

All of the time we were tal[illegible] was painting a picture of Willie [illegible] the park. When I was done, he pai[illegible] in beside him.

The sun was beginning to set and I was getting cold. We drove back to my place in silent contemplation. I was beginning to like Willie more and more and I was sorry to see the afternoon end.

Willie and I watched TV and ate popcorn all evening. I began to doze off at about 10:30 P.M., but Willie wasn't tired at all. Then, suddenly, neither was I. Willie didn't need to unroll his sleeping bag anymore.

The next four days went by quickly--too quickly. I knew Willie wouldn't stay forever, but I was glad we never discussed it. On his fourth day we went to the art museum so I could see a special exhibit. When we got home Willie took on a serious look and told me I was getting too adjusted to him. My mood changed from a high to the lowest.

"But Willie," I argued, "that's not true. I know you're not going to be here forever. But I don't want to talk about it and I don't want to think about it. Can't we just be happy while we're together?"

I stopped to look at the painting which was hanging in the living room so everyone could see it. Willie and me. I wondered how long it would last and I knew Willie was right.

"Willie, you really don't have to go right away, do you? You're free so you could stay forever if you wanted to. Besides..." I hesitated and then stumbled on, "Besides, I love..."

"NO!", Willie interrupted, "don't say it. It's only going to make it harder for me and for you." He looked sad. I don't know if it was because of what we said or how we said it.

I didn't know what to say. He was right. I was right. There wasn't anything left to say. I went and took a shower and thought about Willie. And me. He was a real drifter. There was no way I could ever hold him to me. He'd die of imprisonment like a caged lion.

I decided to apologize to Willie, but when I walked into the living room, he was gone. All of his things were gone, too.

At first, I didn't cry, I just felt like someone knocked the wind out of me. I went to bed and lay there for a few hours. Then I got up and went to sit in the living room. The first thing I saw was the painting.

"God damn it," I shouted to the empty room. I began to cry.

I just sat in the living room chair, being sad and not wanting to do anything. I couldn't go anywhere that meant anything to me, Willie and I had been there together already.

I phoned James, partly to have someone to talk to, but mostly to see if he had heard from Willie. Of course he hadn't since the only time he and Willie had seen each other was at the party.

I got the impulse to jump into my car and just drive around and look for him. But that was ridiculous. If he had left last night, he'd be long gone by now.

I ended up staying at my apartment moping around. I kept staring at the painting and once really took it down to hide it. But the painting stayed and so did the heartache.

I got up the next day and decided to go to the museum. If that couldn't cheer me up, nothing would. When I walked outside, it was cold and gray. Indian summer was no more.

When I arrived at the museum a busload of kids had just gotten there to see the special exhibit. I sat alone outside the museum to wait for the kids to go in. Then out of the corner of my eye I spotted two cowboy boots and looked up. It *was* Willie .

He was sitting there, staring at me.

"I was wondering when you were going to look up. I followed you most of the way from the apartment."

I was in shock, but not for long. I ran over to him and then we were hugging as if he'd never left on bad terms.

"I just couldn't leave on such bad terms without saying good-bye. I've met some new people and I'm leaving the state." He paused for a minute and looked at me. I didn't know what to say. I was so glad to see him, but I didn't want to ask him to stay. No more scenes, no more heartache.

"Willie, I don't know what to say. I'm glad to see you but not to say goodbye."

He understood what I was trying to say.

"Okay, no good-byes, but a song." He got out his guitar and sang "The Drifter", but with more verses.

"Gee, it's nice to see you again.
Haven't seen you since who knows
when
You're the only one brings me back
again
To this town
Might stay around
I only live from day to day.
You haven't changed, it seems
Just as the memories in my lonely
dreams
Looks as though your eyes still beam
I see you smile
But all the while
I know that soon I'll go away.

I'm a drifter, I'ma lonely man.
I try to do whatever I can.
Searchin' for somethin' like an
empty hand
And in the end
We'll part as friends
I'll keep you deep within my
heart.

And if I'm ever back this way again
We'll say the words we could never
send
Sharing our dreams in a perfect
blend.
And till that day
You'll hear me say
You're always near though
we're apart.

I'm a drifter, I'm a lonely man.
I try to do whatever I can.
Searchin' for somethin' like an
empty hand.*

When he finished, I didn't know what to say. Then a car beeped.

"I gotta go, that's my ride. I'll see you if I come back." He stood up and put his guitar away.

"Willie," I had so much to say. How could I in a few seconds? "When you come back, my door will be open."

"Thanks," he said. "Take care." He leaned over and kissed me good-bye.

"Willie, I love you, no matter if you like it or not." There, I had said it.

"Thanks, I guess I love you too, in some way. Adios."

He got into the car and I walked into the museum. I was smiling.

--Terri Boaz

*Also written by Clyde Massaro.

The Thinket

The saw mill was large. I had last been there as a child, but even as an adult, it was an awesome place. For me, the shrill whine of trees being ripped and shredded could still be heard. The dust and age hanging over the place was only a lull. The ancient brick appeared undaunted and oblivious to the sing-songy chants of the children playing about outside. A sense of "deja vue" came over me.

The musty smell that time seems to bring on in a place filled my being, drawing me back to a period before when the setting had been similar.

I was nine. The summer had been boring. The mill was a spooky place. My big brother told me it used to be an Indian burial ground and that the building was haunted. My dad said he was full of beans. I didn't know if it was haunted or not, but it scared me. A nice scare, though. It made me feel like when I'd be in bed at night with my parents asleep and my brother would get under the blanket in my bed and whisper about "bloody bones".

Way in the back, there was a loft above the blade room. The wooden floor squeaked when we crossed it. Barrels of rags, old tool parts, and junk sat around forgotten. One day Chip, Sally and I went to the back by the window where we could see over the lumber yard. As Chip started reading his comic, I went over to the window. Way in the back of the yard a squirrel was running along some rotten studs. The way he would stop and jab his paw between the boards and then run on and stop again made him look like a battery-driven toy with a short. He went on a little further and poked his paw down and then he fell in.

"Oh, there's a baby squirrel caught down there! I'm gonna go help him! You guys wait here for me!"

"Don't get bit! If he bites ya', you'll go mad and you'll have to be shot. ET-ET-ET-ET-ET!!!! You're dead!"

"Come on! Keep your hand on the page so I can read it!"

By the time I got down in the yard the squirrel had left. At least I couldn't find him. I got a stick and ran it along through the boards. As I looked in between the lumber I saw a funny rock thing. I lay down and stuck my arm in up to my shoulder. It was kind of bluish and shiny. It looked something like an arrowhead, but a design was painted on it and a hole was bored in one end, like to put it on a chain.

I took it home. I probably would never have found out it was anything special if my mother hadn't made me go to the PTA meeting with her. An old Indian woman who lived in Scyler was giving a speech on the "Ways of the Zuni." Since we were studying Indians in history, my mother thought it'd benefit me to listen. Whether or not it was good that I went, I still don't know. But I'll never forget it.

My dad had put the "thinket" on a silver chain and I wore it that night. I shall never forget that old Indian woman. When she saw the necklace, she stared, transfixed. She grabbed my shoulders, squeezing, and saying something in Indian. Her face was wrinkled, like the bones had shrunk beneath the skin. Silver ropes of hair hung on each side of the loose face. Her eyes were too large and dark: they looked like two coals pushed into soft mud. The lips were but two scars below a lump of nose. I full well expected that a draft from an open door could lift her as a breeze would stir a dried dandelion. The dress she wore was made of a long black skirt and loose overblouse, heavily embroidered in all colors of threads. A heavy silver medallion hung around her neck, dangling down to the beaded belt cinched about her thin waist.

"Who gave you this?" Nervously, she touched my necklace.

"I found it and my dad put it on a chain for me."

She whispered something in Indian. I was scared and wanted my mother. Where was she?

"You're a special child. The shaman, he willed you to find this. This is his charm, what gives the medicine man his powers. Do you know the secret of it yet? You can have great power with it." Her voice was low, dark. The blackness of the eyes seemed to grow deeper. I felt like she was pulling me into them. I couldn't say anything to her, just thought she had to be crazy, just a crazy old lady. I looked for my mother, but she was helping with the punch and cookies. The old woman just kept talking in Indian and stroking the necklace and me. Finally, my mother was ready to go. I promised the old woman I would come to see her. I was afraid if I didn't she wouldn't let me go home. I didn't tell my mother about what she said. But when we got home, I put the necklace in the back of my drawer. All night, I kept seeing the necklace, half expecting an evil spirit to seep out of the dresser. When I shut my eyes, I saw the Indian's burning black ones.

I decided to keep my promise, although I didn't know why. My mother

thought it was nice that I'd been so impressed as to want a private lesson. I rode my bike the four miles to her small cabin. It sat just outside the city limits in a grove of cedar.

She was sitting crosslegged on the ground as I rode up. Seeing her again, my stomach churned. Her old age seemed of another era, not of modern agedness; she seemed a dream and I became part of that dream.

My necklace was supposed to possess the powers of the universe; the one who held it could know the answer to all. She told me of the Trickster, the semi-god whose lust for the charm kept him in constant war with the shaman. I was warned of my special "position" now that I possessed this Charm of Life.

If my charm had any special powers, they were never revealed to me. But maybe they were. I was drawn to the old woman. Never was I full of lessons of life as she saw them. I remained frightened. Everything seemed beyond me.

Yet, I visited her again and again. The soft flow of her words, the intense feeling and her mesmerizing stories possessed me more than I did the necklace. Her need to teach me was obvious. Our visits became extremely important to me. The charm remained our secret; I never told anyone what it was.

That school year passed quickly. Had I known that with the coming of spring, I would lose my friend, I am sure I would have challenged my charm's powers to stop the changing season. But I did not know.

I had never experienced death before. That I would never see her again seemed absurd. It is funny how you never think about the good times. Somehow, they seem as fixed as the sunrise. But they melt away like a snowflake held in the palm of your hand. So beautiful they are but so fragile. Before you've even seen their beauty you have nothing.

But life goes on. And the pain diminishes. Sometimes it's even luxurious to revisit that past and stretch warmly in its light.

It was odd, those noises there. I wondered what sounds that building's ghosts recalled when their memories were jogged.

That funny combined odor of sawdust and age brought me back to the present, just as it had taken me to the past. The children shrieked and I had to hurry to my mother's for my own children. As I bent to dust off my shoes, my necklace fell to the dirt. I saw the charm [illegible] in the dust and knew that it, too, must return. It was hard to leave it there. But the season had changed.

--Bonnie Sylvester

Victoria

I only remember seeing Aunt Molly cry just that one time. Not that she don't have feelings, mind you, cause she has feelings. Oh, yeah. She has real strong feelings--about most everything! She pours love out on me and Uncle George so free, we could get fat on it. It don't seem like I'm an orphan, it never has, since first she brought me home to live with her and Uncle George. Aunt Molly made it real clear to me, and to everybody else, that I belong.

I really wouldn't even think about it at all, except for Joe Ed Squires. He thinks it's his mission in life to make me miserable at least once a day. Joe Ed is in sixth grade with me. He's two years older and a head and a half taller, but I'm faster, lots faster. I prove it every afternoon on the way home from school--him chasing me every foot of the way--his big fat mouth yackin' and yammerin' in rhythm with his feet.

Willy Oates, Willy Oates
Looks just like a Billy goat.
His Pa's gone, his Ma's dead.
Silly orphan, Willy Oates.

"Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" I screamed back over my shoulder as I ran.

Joe Ed lost no time. If the words weren't hurting, well, he'd just see to it that a few sticks and stones would. He chucked big rocks as quick as he could pick 'em up. Then, I not only had to outrun Joe Ed, I had to outrun the rocks.

I'd come flying in the back door, durn near fall over the cat, laying there catching a short snooze, and Aunt Molly would be there in the kitchen, humming, making supper and remark, "My, my. You surely don't dawdle, do you boy?"

"No, Aunt Molly, I reckon I make it home from school faster than any kid in Thalonia, Missouri." (Thanks to Joe Ed.)

Aunt Molly would set a tall glass of cold milk and some fresh baked ginger bread covered with thick dollaps of butte

on the table, ruffle my hair a little, kiss the top of my head and say, "I'm always glad to see you hurrying through that door, Willy. I miss you when you're away."

Well, now, I didn't have the heart to mention anything about old Joe Ed Squires or that I might even want to stop by the crick for a quick look around. If Aunt Molly liked to see me running in that door every afternoon, I guess I'd just keep right on doing it. Specially seeing how Joe Ed didn't show no promise of stopping his daily escort home. Besides, today was special. It was her birthday. Weeks and weeks ago, Uncle George had ordered her a really super surprise all the way from Jefferson City and I couldn't hardly wait till he got home with it.

* * * * *

Molly! M-o-ll-eeeee, come out here!!" Uncle George's big-sounding summons filled the air with good-natured insistence.

"Merciful heavens. What's got into George? All that clamoring could wake the dead."

She got as far as the door and stopped in her tracks. She saw it.

"Happy birthday, Molly, Darlin'" sang out Uncle George, his broad grin fairly dripping with pride and joy.

Aunt Molly walked out the door, and circled around it two or three times before she said another word, fondling the beautiful finish with her finger tips as she went. "A Victoria. Oh, George, it's the most beautiful carriage I've ever seen. Is it mine? You don't really mean this is mine?"

The low-built pleasure carriage would seat just two people and was named for Queen Victoria of England, and it had a raised driver's seat in front and a folding top. It gleamed so. It must have had 25 coats of oil paint in order to make such a shine possible.

"You don't have to walk to Thursday Evening Ladies Social or Sunday church in the rain or the hot sun either, if it pleasures you to ride. Now, you've got your own buggy."

"This is no buggy, George; this is a carriage, a fine lady's carriage."

"Well, I don't know of no finer lady to have one."

"Me neither, Aunt Molly." I felt so good inside, I thought I would float. It was all I could do to keep my feet touching the ground. I've never seen Aunt Molly so happy - or Uncle George either.

* * * * *

All week long Thursday seemed to drag its feet. I thought it would never get here. But, it was worth waiting for. Aunt Molly looked like a queen herself, sitting in that new buggy, her back straighter and stiffer than a fresh-starched collar. All eyes on the street aimed in her direction, she smiled and waved to every one of them. She even stopped and give Parson Dunlap and his Missus a ride to the social. Of course, the Parson had to sit up front on the driver's seat.

Aunt Molly wasn't all braggy or nothin, she was just so proud and happy that she wanted to share it with everybody. There are them folks, being jealous and all, that said that she was gettin plum uppity. Wouldn't you just know that one of them folks would turn out to be Lydie Squires, Joe Ed's momma. Her real name was Lydia, but I can't remember anybody callin her anything cept Lydie.

On Sunday, we rode to church in the new buggy. Uncle George drove, while me and Aunt Molly sat back in the shade of the fold-up top which was made of genuine hand-rubbed leather. I sure did feel grand. Parson Dunlap gave his sermon on the 9th Commandment, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods. I guess he could see the need for it.

* * * * *

Monday morning. Uncle George left for work and I was helpin Aunt Molly clear away breakfast and talking about what a nice weekend it had been. He cambe back in the house all gray and pale lookin. He sat down in the chair and didn't say nothin for awhile. "Molly, you'd better sit down here for a minute. I got to tell you something.

"What in the world is the matter, George, you look like you just saw a ghost."

"Now, Molly, don't make this any harder for me than it already is... Somebody poured whitewash all over the buggy last night."

Aunt Molly didn't make a sound, or even show no sign that she was upset. She just got up, went to the pump and filled the bucket with water and soap, picked up her brush and cleaning rags and went outside. Uncle George didn't go to work and I didn't go to school. We cleaned and scrubbed all day. Aunt Molly worked like a wild woman, doing more than me and Uncle George put together. We finally got all the whitewash off the oil paint finish but too

they'd been talking about. Aunt Molly swept past them, tilting her head up and to one side just a wee bit and greeted them all pleasantly, if a might too casually, with, "Evenin, ladies."

The business over, the women gathered around the quilt, commandeering for positions. Each one knew just where she left off last week, judging her own stitches to be the smallest, and most exact. Lydie and Aunt Molly were opposite each other. After fifteen minutes, Lydie broke the silence. "Really, Molly Oates, I never would have thought that you above all people, would treat me in such an off-landed manner in public. I've never been so embarrassed in my whole life. Will I never be able to see you without feeling so ill at ease? Everybody, just everybody, has to know by your actions that Joe Ed did damage to your buggy. I just feel terrible. How could you?"

Aunt Molly stared at Lydie. After what seemed an eternity, she stood up, hovering over Lydie, trying to muster up some remnants of her self-control. "I've never in my entire life deliberately been unkind to you or anybody else, Lydie Squires. You claim to be embarrassed, and maybe you are, and maybe you should be. I never would have aired our dirty laundry here in public, but since you insist on speaking your mind, you'll get a piece of mine. Joe Ed did wrong when he whitewashed my buggy, he tarnished our private dreams. Willy did wrong when he tried to revenge himself and me. So, you *feel* terrible, *do* you? And I'll just bet you *feel* entitled to be miserable. Well, what about me? Am *I* not to be entitled to have feelings? Am I not entitled to feel remorse? It *was* Willie that has been persecuted. Am I only to *feel* for*give*ness? For I was the one trespassed against. Well, I don't *feel* forgiving. It's a shock and a surprise to even me, but my heart is full of hatred and you put it there, Lydie Squires. You put it there!"

Sobs ripped the air as Aunt Molly ran from the room that was now so quiet you could no longer hear the breathing.

--Sharon Marizza

SORE LOSER

It was a warm November day and I wasn't about to waste it. Dribbling the basketball on the old court at Coy Park, I noticed that things were pretty quiet on the Sunday afternoon. That's the way things usually are in a small town. Except for the little kid on his bike in front of the library, I was all alone.

I hustled to the west basket, which was the lower one, where most of the younger kids would shoot. Taking a long shot was my specialty. I had this favorite spot to the right of the free throw line. Making three shots in a row was pretty good for me. I felt like a pro. Pulling my old green pants up and my old red sweatshirt down, I ran in and scooped up the Volt-special Mom bought me for Christmas. It didn't bounce too well, but it was regulation size and not beat up too bad.

The blacktop on the full court was sort of charcoal black, like the road in front of our house. I remembered the first encounter I ever had with Mr. Blacktop. I was riding my silver-blue Sting-Ray around the court as fast as I could, trying to see how many consecutive laps I could make. Hanging tightly to the dark blue handle grips, I had just made a sharp turn to the left, when I suddenly gripped air. The next thing I knew, my right knee hit the black surface with terrific force. My knee skimmed along the rough edges of the court, scraping my flesh untul the blood began to ooze. From then on, I had watched myself carefully.

Dribbling with my left hand was something I had been working on. Mr. McDowell, our P.E. teacher, told us to practice because that was the only way to learn. I really didn't believe him, but it sounded good. So, I would try to use my wrists as much as possible in handling the ball on the court. After a while, my hand would get numb, so I'd switch back to the other one. Finally, I would get so bored I would begin shooting lay-ups.

Lay-ups were fun because I liked to watch the ball hit off the backboard and go into the basket. Our backboard was a faded gray and made of some kind of metal. When the ball hit the backboard, it would make a clinging sound. I continued to shoot lay-ups off the back until I heard a voice from behind.

"Hey, Frank, can I shoot with you?" I had been facing towards the Post Office, right behind the basket. Turning towards the walnut tree, to the left of the foul lines and at half-court, was Rick Martin.

"Sure, Rick, you can shoot." I then threw him a chest pass which he grabbed with ease.

He'd been munching on a ten cent bag of Frito's. Crunching down the last one, he crumpled up the red and yellow package and threw it in the grass alongside the court. All this time, he'd been holding the ball on his right hip. Then Marti, his nickname, dribbled towards the basket.

"What you been up to Frank?" the young athlete asked me while grandstanding

the ball. He took three steps to the right of the free throw line and fired. Zip!

"Oh, just shooting around," I said. "There's nothing else much to do on Sunday, except ride bikes. What have you been doing?"

Marti looked at me for a second and then took another shot. "Well, I just got back from eating dinner at Uncle Vic's and I thought I'd come down and see what was happening."

Marti and I were fairly good friends. We weren't of the same physical appearance, but sports drew us together. He'd been a player and I was the team's manager last year, so you could say that sports had brought us together.

We shot around for about fifteen minutes and I was ready for a game. "Let's play a game or something like that. How about to ten by one's, Marti?"

I said he could have the ball first but he insisted I should get first outs. "You might as well get ready to be whipped, Frank."

"Well, let's start out here at this end now." I didn't feel like running full court because I knew he would tucker me out.

Taking the ball out, I began dribbling towards the right side. As he guarded me as close as he could, I dribbled with my back facing him. Trying to move in, I finally stopped about five feet from the basked and tried to shoot over him. My inch and a half advantage came in handy. The ball rattled around the hoop but finally fell in.

Marti took the ball out and began to put on the speed. I put my arms up and tried to stop him, but before I could, he was around me and in for the score.

"Good shot, Marti. You beat me that time." I glanced towards the basket as I took the ball out. No way could I beat him, but I thought I'd give it a try. After all, my shooting seemed to be pretty decent.

Marti played back towards the basket so I wouldn't get in close. It was like he was guarding a fort or something. His whole face was glistening with intent upon the ball. I had to laugh to myself because he was taking me so seriously.

I crossed to the right side but the black-haired youth had me all bottled up. I came out to the front again. Finally I moved to my favorite position and pumped the ball towards the basket. Marti prepared to grab the rebound, but the ball clearly hit the backboard and bounded in for a score.

"Just luck, Frank," Marti yell[illegible] at me. He grabbed the ball off cou[illegible] and spit as he set up for another shot.

"You better watch it, Marti. The Boston Celtics may sign me up."

"Sure, Frank, I can just see you and Bill Russell side by side."

I came out again to stop him and had him trapped. But he threw the ball against my leg and recovered the ball. I backed up to stop a lay-up, but it didn't matter because he hit a long shot. We were tied at two apiece.

* * * * *

I rested beside the old walnut tree, but the sweat continued to run down my face. I couldn't believe I had kept up with Marti and that the score was tied at eight apiece. Wait till the guys heard about this! Maybe I'd get to play at recess next time.

"You ready, Frank? I'm tired of stalling. Let's get on with the game. You've had enough rest."

Frank was leaning against the pole which held up the basket. His face was wet too, but nothing like mine.

I took the ball out and playfully dribbled around. "Come out and catch me, Marti. If you don't,I'll shoot it."

"Go ahead and shoot the ball, Frank. Your luck is running out on you."

I had all the time I needed in the world to set up the shot. It was as if I was by myself. The ball sailed clearly through.

I'm going to win, I thought to myself. Imagine that. Frank Larson beating Rick Martin on the basketball court!=

Marti was straightfaced and all serious. He acted like it was a matter of life and death. He was Patrick Henry and our country would be lost if he didn't win.

I wanted the game now. I could smell victory. Boy, would Mom be surprised.

Marti dribbled up to the free throw line and started to talk me into coming out. "Hey, Frank, here's the ball; come and get it."

I knew he was just waiting for me to come out so he could drive around me, but I did it anyway. Lunging towards the ball and Rick, I tried to steal it. Marti easily moved away and was on the verge of an easy lay-up.

I turned and expected to see the ballgame all tied up, but the ball hit the left edge of the rim and landed away from the basket. Marti quickly tried to recapture the ball, but it was too far away from him. I managed to pounce on it and get away.

Marti turned red and slapped his hands together just like the football players do when they miss a play. His face was turning as dark a red as Grandma's pickled beets.

"Take it easy, Marti," I shouted, "it's just a game."

"Shut up and play," he snapped.

I wanted to break out laughing at his actions, but that would have to wait. I dribbled the ball to the top of the free throw line. Marti was out as far as he could be.

He wasn't going to let me shoot, so I decided to budge my way in. I slowly pushed him back closer and closer towards the basket. It was much like a bulldozer pushing back a fence. I was closer to the basket than he was. I had to be careful because he kept reaching for the ball. Otherwise, it would be just like what usually happened. A good game but a loss.

Turning to the left, I switched to dribbling with my left hand. I hoped Mr. McDowell's lesson would help. Marti continued to stick like glue.

Finally, the time of decision had come. I had to shoot. Marti kept trying to get at the ball. I decided to shoot.

It was hard because he had his hand in my face. But I threw the ball up anyway. Both heads quickly turned up towards the target. The ball was rising and heading towards the general direction but it had been a bad shot.

At least, I thought it had. The ball hit the top of the rim and bounced around for a split second. Then it dropped into the hoop.

I had won 10-8. All right!" I yelled. "Good game, Marti."

The expression on his face was unbelievable. He looked like he had just awakened from a bad, bad dream.

"Oh, shut up, Frank."

"Take it easy, Marti. It's just a game," I beamed.

"What about it!" he shot back. "You know I didn't try my hardest."

"Sure you did, Marti. You al[illegible] play like that when you give the game away. Why don't you just admit you lost?"

Marti continued to give a look of disbelief. "Are you kidding?" he yelled. His voice was beginning to rise and get squeaky. "No way, Fatso."

The remark really showed I had gotten under his skin. Anytime someone was jealous or mad at me, they liked to call me that.

I just started laughing as Marti crossed the sidewalk across the street. Pulling my Sting-Ray from a resting place on the monkey bars, I hopped on the banana seat like a cowboy. I laughed all the way home.

--Fred Nelson

The Fable of the Unusual Pet

Once, not too many times ago, there was a man whose name was Ralph Rentag. He owned the Supreme Soy Sauce and Sump Pump Company. He was very wealthy and traveled much throughout the known and unknown world.

One day he found himself in the market place of darkest Shandool. In front of him was a small shop that sold smelly candles and cute little pipes. He peered into the semi-darkness of the shop and saw an unusual animal . Lying in a rubbermaid washbasin was a baby trog.

"How much is that troggie in the window?" Ralph asked as he entered the place.

"You wouldn't want to buy that beast, offendy," the old proprietress whined. "That little bugger will grow up to be a six-foot-long, clawing, vicious, 200-pound trog. The trog is one of the most ferocious animals alive."

"Nonsense," said Ralph, "with tender loving care and upbringing, he'll be gentle as a lion. How much is he?"

The old Shandoolian was unyielding. "I couldn't sell that fierce creature. No, no, offendy, no way. Someday when he is full grown, he could turn on you and tear you to pieces. I couldn't stand to have that on my conscience. He's not for sale."

"I'll give you $19.95 plus tax for him."

"Will that be cash or charge, sir?"

A quick flip of his 'Debt Forever' credit card and the little trog belonged to Ralph. He took his new pet back home to his palatial estate in Manticoke, Pennsylvania.

"I'm too busy with business to raise this critter properly," thought Ralph. "I'll have to hire someone to be a trog nanny."

A wandering circus wandered into Manticoke and there Ralph met Richard Parget. Richard was a flea-biter and bull-thrower in the show.

"Would you like to come to work for me and help raise my trog with tender loving care?" Ralph inquired.

"I would probably like that OK," said Parget, "but you could never top the salary I get here at the circus. I'm a headlighter, you know."

"I don't mess around, Parget. I'll give you $19.95 a week plus your own room under the aquarium," offered Ralph.

"That tops it," said Richard Parget. "When do I start?"

Ralph brought Richard home to meet the trog, which he had named Timmy. Richard Parget and Timmy got along very well. Richard's care of the animal was tender and loving. He worked hard with his charge. In time, he even taught the young trog to roll under, play alive, and to throw away sticks and balls. Timmy became gentle as a lion with Richard and Ralph.

The trog grew and grew, until he was over six feet long and weighed over 200 pounds. He had long claws and sharp teeth. Although potentially dangerous, Timmy never so much as scratched his nanny or his master. The big beast didn't like strangers, however. Mailmen and salesmen were greeted with snarls and growls.

Ralph and Richard and Timmy had many good times together over the years (see MY GOOD TIMES OVER THE YEARS TOGETHER WITH RICHARD AND TIMMY, THE TROG, by Ralph Rentag, Singleweek 1995, $19.95).

Thus 30 years went by before they knew it (and they were pretty upset when they found out). They were all getting old. Ralph was now semi-retired. He had sold the soy sauce factory and set up a charitable foundation. Ralph was now President of WOPEN, an organization dedicated to Wipe Out Practically Everything Nasty.

Timmy had lived much longer than the normal twenty-year life span of a trog. He wasn't as spry as he used to be and he was a little deaf, but his teeth and claws were still sharp.

Time had dealt poor Richard Parget a crueler hand and he hadn't been able to discard. He was 80 years old and ready to fold.

"Richard," said Ralph one day, "you've been with us for over 30 years, taking care of Timmy. You've been a dear friend to Timmy and me, like a member of the family."

"Thanks, Ralph," wheezed Richard. "You're too kind."

"You're not getting any younger, Richard, and Timmy is arriving at an advanced age. He'll be needing more care now and, frankly, old pal, I've noticed that you can't hack it anymore."

"I'm sorry, Ralph," Richard whimpered. "I've failed you and Timmy. If you'd only lend me the money for my operation, I'd be able to do so much better."

"Come on," snorted Ralph,"don't bring that up again. I can't lend you that kind of money. Your salary's too low and you don't have any collateral, and besides, who would take care of Timmy while you were recuperating? Nope, I'm sorry, buddy, this is it. I've already hired a new nanny for Timmy."

"But, Ralph, what will I do? Where will I go?" Richard cried.

"Don't worry, old friend, I've made arrangements for the retirement you've dreamed about, the rest you've earned. Here's a sack lunch and bus fare to the poorhouse. You don't even have to pay me back."

"Thanks, Ralph, you're too kind." Richard said as he bent down to lick his former boss's boots. "May I just say a quick good-bye to Timmy?"

"I don't think that would be a good idea. I wouldn't want to get him all upset. Good-bye, Richard."

Later that day there was a knock on the doorbell. Ralph went to the door and found a young man standing under the mat.

"And who might you be, lad?" Ralph asked.

"I might be Lad, but in fact, I'm not. I'm Richard Bavoome, the new trog nanny from the agency."

"Wonderful," said Ralph, "let's go right down to Timmy's room and get you two acquainted."

Timmy's first reaction to Richard Bavoome was one of distrust and dislike. He growled and snarled and acted as if the new nanny was a hated enemy.

Ralph did everything he could think of to get Timmy accustomed to his new nanny, but nothing seemed to work. Later, Timmy seemed to calm down and even let Bavoome pat his heads.

Richard Bavoome went out to get Timmy's supper. As soon as he walked back into the room, Timmy bristled. His claws came out and he bared his trog teeth. It was as if he had never seen the new nanny before.

"This is Richard, your new nanny, Timmy," said Ralph. "You remember him. He's your friend."

Timmy would have none of it. He growled and lunged at the new man. Ralph had to grab him by the collars and hold on for Bavoome's dear life. Timmy couldn't get used to Richard Bavoome. If the nanny stayed in the room for a while, the trog would eventually quiet down. When Richard left and then came back, however, Timmy would tense up and snarl as if the man were a total stranger. This went on for several days.

"I can't understand it," puzzled Ralph. "Timmy was so good with his old nanny." At that moment, Richard Bavoome returned from emptying the trog turds. Timmy started growling. Ralph turned to the trog and said, "Timmy, this is Richard, your new friend. Don't you know him yet? Can't you see he's your buddy?"

Timmy's answer was straightforward. With a mighty roar, he swung out a clawed paw and would have decapitated Richard Bavoome if he had not picked that instant to bend over to tie the laces of his loafer. As it was, Timmy did crease the man's back, removing a large portion of his shirt and some small amount of his skin along the way.

Ralph and a rather terrified Richard managed to wrestle Timmy into his cast-iron crib. "I think, Mr. Rentag, that I will retire from the trog nanny business," said the young Bavoome. "Timmy will never be my friend. I'm going to get into a safer line of work, like being a taster in a poison plant. Good-bye!"

Ralph called the agency and asked them to send another trog nanny. "This time don't send me any chicken-hearted kid. I want someone with raw guts." He hung up and waited.

About an hour later, he heard someone running up the drive. A few seconds later the front door crashed in. On top of the door stood a giant of a man, seven feet tall, at least 300 pounds, holding a shopping bag.

"Who are you?" Ralph asked.

"I'm Richard Rugged, your new trog nanny. Where do you want me to put this bag of guts? They're raw you know, and starting to leak a little."

"Never mind that now. I want you to meet Timmy, the trog, right away so he can get to know you quickly. I have to go away on WOPEN Foundation business next week and you have to be able to handle him by then."

Ralph brought Richard Rugged back to Timmy's room, but it was the same as before. Every time the new nanny left and returned, it was as if the trog had never laid eyes on him. They checked his vision, but it was perfect. He could spot a mailman at 200 yards.

"Timmy, this is Richard Rugged, your new nanny. He's going to take care of you and be your companion. Please learn to recognize him," Ralph pleaded.

The trog just snapped at Richard and reached out some paws to lacerate him. "Let me handle this, Mr. Rentag," said Richard Rugged. "Look, Timmy, I'm going to be taking care of you. Get used to the idea, see! We're going to be real close from now on and you're going to like me, understand?"

Richard Rugged's words were strangely prophetic. When Ralph returned from his business trip, a few days later, all that was left of the nanny were his crew cut and the soles of his sneakers (in which still remained the soles of his feet). Timmy had a pleased expression on his face that indicated that he was indeed very close to, and really had liked, Richard Rugged.

"Naughty, naughty trog! This is terrible, Timmy! I'm ashamed of you," Ralph scolded the aging animal. "Why can't you get along with your nannies? You almost clawed off the head of the first new one and the second one you ate as if he were a mailman. Why, Timmy, why?"

Ralph was beside himself (which made things a little crowded). What a predicament he was in. He couldn't get rid of Timmy. He loved his pet too much. He couldn't take care of the trog himself. He was too busy with the work of the WOPEN Foundation. Besides, the thought of changing trog litter made him sick. If he called the agency for another nanny, the same thing might happen as with the last two.

Then, suddenly, like a lightning case of Clifton's Disease, it hit him.

He picked himself up off the floor and said, "Of course, why didn't I think of that before?"

He ran to the phone and called the agency. "Hello, agency, do you have anymore trog ninnies. . . I mean. . . nannies left. . . I mean, available? You do? Good, could you read off their names?"

"Richard Harnischfeger? No, not him.

"Richard M. Moxin? NO, not that one.

"Sam Jones? Yes, that's the one. Send him right out here."

About twenty minutes later, Sam Jones arrived. Ralph took hmm right in to meet Timmy.

"This is your new nanny, Sam Jones. I know that you two will get along fine." And they did. Timmy began to purr as Sam patted his heads. It was the beginning of a great friendship.

"How silly of me not to remember the old saying," explained Ralph. "Everybody knows that:

You can't teach an old trog
new Dick's!"

--Arthur Pratt

Play Review

The Last of the Red Hot Lovers, which opened last weekend at Curbside Playhouse, is a Neil Simon comedy from its guilt-plagued toes to its anxiety-ridden fingertips. Hero Barney Cashman is a middle-aged, middle-American Everyman whom Simon's skilful wit makes us identify with even as we laugh at him. Barney owns a fish restaurant in Manhattan; he is in his 40's and has been married to the same woman for 23 years. Under this stable surface beats a restless heart. Barney feels he's missed something in life; he's never had an Affair.

The three-act play takes place in Barney's mother's apartment while she is out doing volunteer work and chronicles his attempts at an affair with three different women. This formula recalls Simon's success with Plaza Suite, and Lee Schrock, the talented young actor who plays Barney, has something of Walter Matthau in his deep, marshmallowy voice, his sloping nose, and his fumbling sincerity.

Barney's first choice for An Affair is loud and lusty Elaine Nevazio, played by Sam Knutson, who is experienced at Curbside as an actress and director. The first act gets a lot of comic mileage from some nice touches, such as Barney's whispering "because his mother's neighbor might overhear his secret carryings-on; his purchase of one pint of Scotch and two glasses for the seduction; and his placing his wet galoshes on a newspaper so they won't leave a suspicious stain on his mother's rug. He constantly sniffs his fingertips for traces of the oysters he opens at his fish restaurant.

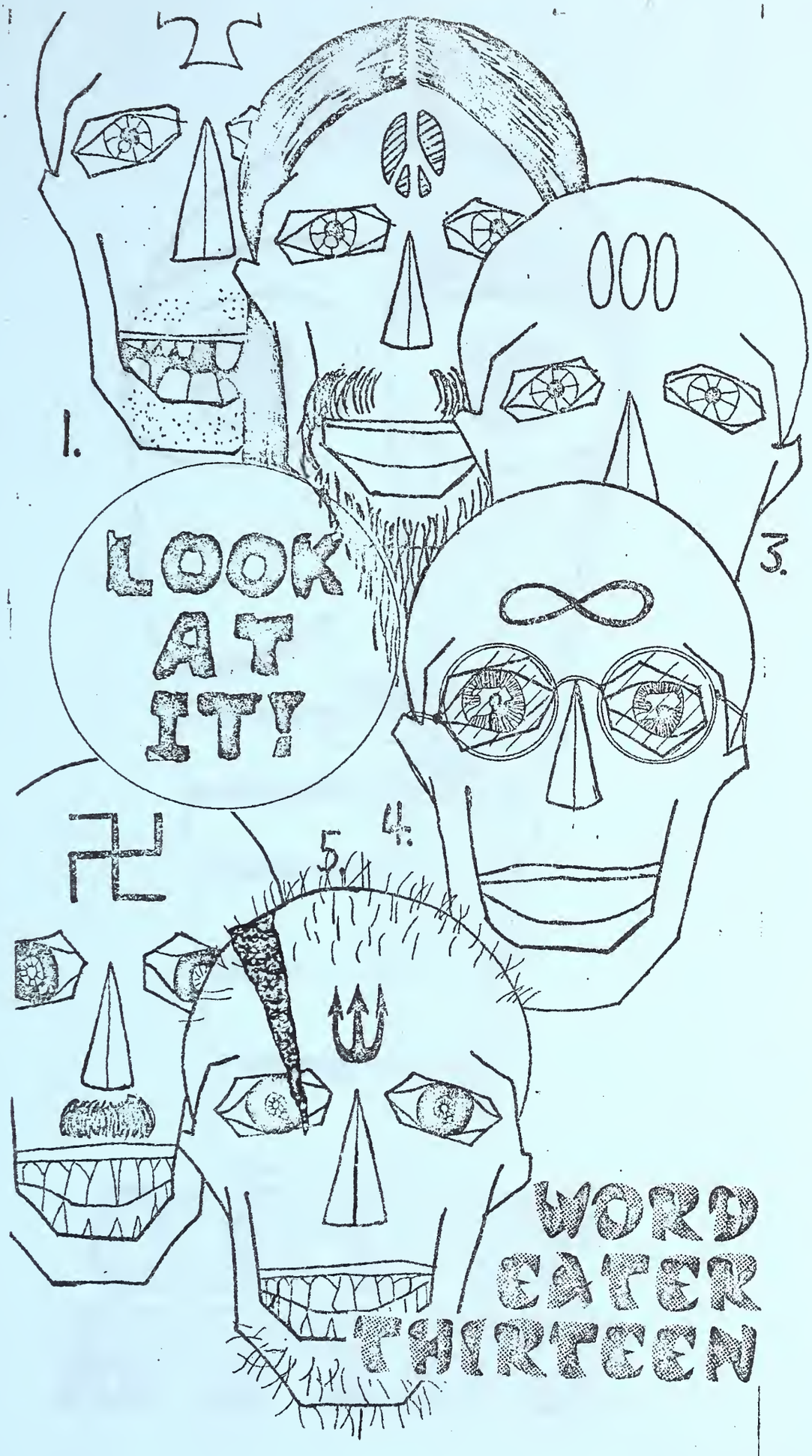
The first act has one fault: it's too long. Neil Simon's characters talk and talk. Barney boxes himself in with words: "Why? What if?",while his bored partner makes it plain that she came to the apartment for s-e-x.

Act II, while shorter, strains believability. This time, Barney has picked up Bobbi, a pot-smoking, free-wheeling kook, who flashes with glitter and hints at perversion with her references to leather bedspreads and ships. I'm not sure whether Bonnie Ashby overplays the part of Bobbi or the part overplays her. Her inconsistent attempts at a New York accent sounded strange and unnecessary.

Act III is Simon's best. In Act I, Barney was full of doubts about his own morality. Now he is eager for the fulfillment he is sure an affair will bring him. Unfortunately, his chosen partner this time is his wife's best friend, a timid woman whose tears, melancholia, and guilt are outrageously comic. Nancy Lockhart turns in a fine, funny performance as Jeannette Fisher, who is sure she has been happy for only 8.2% of her life.

In one of the best lines of the play, and one of Simon's shrewdest observations of middle-class life, Jeannette asks Barney: "You're not appalled by all the promiscuity you find everywhere?" and he, increasingly frustrated, answeres, "I don't find it anywhere! I hear about it, but I don't find it!" There is much like this in this play that, while sometimes uneven, is light and sharp and makes us laugh at Barney, his women friends, and ourselves.

--Ilana B. Pratt
8 June 1975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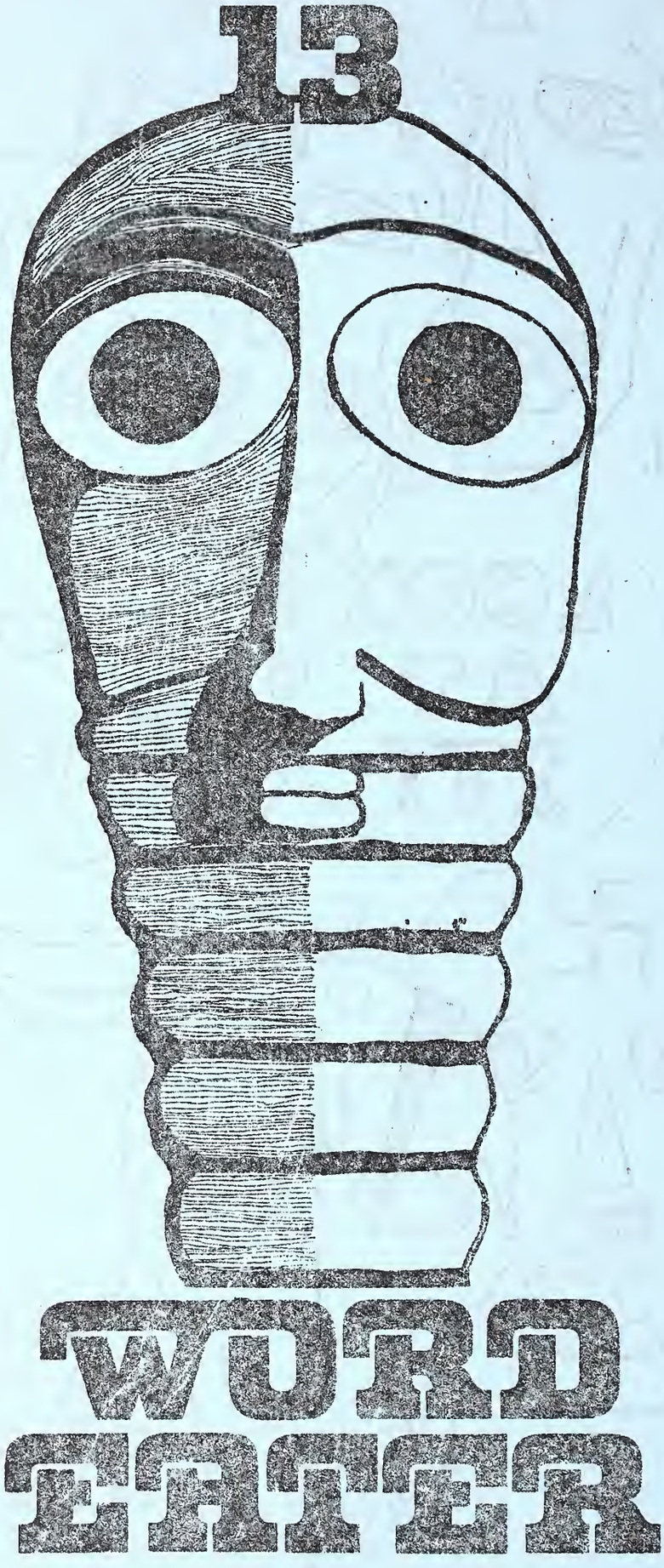
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